



FACT SHEET

Natchez Trace Parkway

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Superintendent: Cameron H. Sholly

Established: Authorized by Congress on May 18, 1938 (52 Stat. 407)

Background: The Old Natchez Trace was a series of paths carved out of the landscape by large animals, American Indians, European explorers, and American settlers. Over time, the paths were gradually linked and used for transportation, communication, and trade. For more than two decades, the Old Trace was the most significant highway of the Old Southwest and one of the more important roads in the nation. From 1785 to the 1820s, it was an avenue of exploration, international rivalry, warfare, trade, settlement, and development. During this “Boatmen Period”, owners of agricultural products, livestock, coal, and other materials from the Ohio River Valley floated their goods down the Mississippi River to ports in Natchez and New Orleans. Once the goods were sold, the “Kaintucks” sold their boats for the lumber and hiked or rode horses toward home via the Old Trace. In 1800, it was designated a national post road for the delivery of mail. General Andrew Jackson used the Old Trace to march troops from Nashville to and from the Battle of New Orleans, ensuring defeat of Britain at the end of the War of 1812. The Old Trace was traveled by many, including Chickasaw and Choctaw Indians, “Kaintuck boatmen”, Andrew and Rachael Jackson, Jefferson Davis, Aaron Burr, Henry Clay, James Audubon, Meriwether Lewis, and many outlaws such as John Murrell, the Harpe brothers and Samuel Mason. New roads, the development of the steamboat and the rerouting of portions of the national post road led to the death of the Old Trace as a major transportation corridor by the mid 1820s.

In 1905, the Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR) began a grassroots effort to place granite markers in every Mississippi county through which the Old Trace ran. Other dedicated individuals embraced this wonderful vision and enhanced it by suggesting that a paved parkway be constructed to permanently memorialize the Old Trace. These individuals included Mrs. Roane Fleming Byrnes and other members of the Natchez Trace Parkway Association; local, state, and federal political leaders; and other devoted supporters too numerous to mention. Over many decades they, and their successors, generously gave of their time and resources to ensure that this vibrant symbol of America’s heritage was developed to remind current and future generations of what the Old Southwest had been, and what it had become.

Designations: The Parkway is one of America’s 125 National Scenic Byways including 27 All-American Roads (11/05). The Parkway is unique among federal recreational motorways because it commemorates an earlier transportation route. Official designations (dates): National Parkway (National Park Service-5/18/38), National Forest Scenic Byway (14-mile segment that bisects the Tombigbee National Forest--U.S. Forest Service--12/4/90), AAA Scenic Byway (American Automobile Association--4/10/91), and All-American Road

and National Scenic Byway (Federal Highway Administration--9/23/96). Natchez Trace National Scenic Trail (4 segments parallel to Parkway--3/28/83).

Awards: Biennial Award for Engineering Excellence in Highway Design, US Department of Transportation, 1982 and 1994; Award of Excellence, Post-Tensioning Institute, Steam Mill Hollow Bridge, 1987; Nine design awards for the Double Arch Bridge including Presidential Design Award, National Endowment for the Arts, 1995; Presidential Award for Design Excellence, Outstanding Achievement in Design for the Government of the U. S. of America, 1997; Grand Award of Engineering Excellence (Florida Institute of Consulting Engineers, 1994, American Society of Landscape Architects 1899-1999 Centennial Medallion, National Landmark for Outstanding Landscape Architecture; Partnership Award, NPS Southeast Region, 2002; National Fire Plan Excellence in Community Assistance, 2005; Best Practice of Southern Tourism, Southern Governors' Association, 2005; Award of Excellence, (Overall Public Relations Campaign), Southern Public Relations Federation, 2005; Official Southern Treasure, Southern Traveler Magazine, 2005; Tourism Promotion of the Year, Mississippi Tourism Association, 2006; Excellence in Highway Design Merit Award, Federal Highway Administration, 2006; and Readers Choice Award—Favorite Scenic Drive, Southern Living Magazine, multiple years.

Location: The Parkway is located in three states: Mississippi (MS)--309 miles, Alabama (AL)—33 miles, and Tennessee (TN)—102 miles. It traverses 7 counties in TN (Davidson, Williamson, Maury, Hickman, Lewis, Lawrence, and Wayne), 2 counties in AL (Lauderdale and Colbert) and 16 counties in MS (Tishomingo, Prentiss, Itawamba, Lee, Pontotoc, Chickasaw, Clay, Webster, Choctaw, Attala, Leake, Madison, Hinds, Claiborne, Jefferson, and Adams). Headquarters is located in Tupelo, MS.

Congressional Districts: (District-Party) **MS Senators:** Cochran (R) and Wicker (R). **MS Representatives:** Childers (1st-D), Thompson (2nd-D), and Harper (3rd-R). **AL Senators:** Sessions (R) and Shelby (R). **AL Representatives:** Griffith (5th-D). **TN Senators:** Corker (R) and Alexander (R). **TN Representatives:** Davis (4th-D), Cooper (5th-D), and Blackburn (7th-R). (As of May, 2009)

Size: 52,289 acres covering a distance of 444 miles. The Parkway averages 800 feet in width.

FY09 Budget: \$11.6 million authorized budget.

Concessions: There are no concessions currently on the Parkway. [Little Mountain Service Center at Jeff Busby campground closed April, 2008. The campground is still open.]

FTEs: 150 permanent employees plus an average of 30 seasonal employees.

Visitation: The Parkway is the seventh most visited unit in the National Park System with 5.7 million recreation visits in 2008. The total number of visits to the Parkway in 2008 was 13.9 million.

Sites Administered by the Parkway: Tupelo National Battlefield, Brices Cross Roads National Battlefield Site, Natchez Trace National Scenic Trail. In 1961, Congress, through legislation, delegated administration of the Meriwether Lewis National Monument (Meriwether Lewis Unit) and Ackia Battlefield (Chickasaw Village Site) to the Parkway.

Scenic Resources: The Parkway's scenic vistas encompass a traditional southern landscape that offers travelers manicured grassy roadsides and native tree plantings intermingled with a mosaic of hardwood and softwood forest communities, wetlands, prairie landscapes, agricultural croplands, abundant wildlife, and architecturally significant bridges and structures.

Cultural Resources: More than 180 separate segments of the Old Trace have been identified within the Parkway's boundaries and represent about 97 miles of the historic route. Other historic properties include structures, roads, Civil War battlefields and campsites, an open pit iron ore mine, historic inn sites, historic houses, and some 36 known cemetery sites on or adjacent to the Old Trace. Some of the most significant properties include the Mount Locust Plantation near Natchez, Mississippi; the John Gordon House in Tennessee; and the Meriwether Lewis Monument, also in Tennessee, which marks the grave of the renowned explorer. A complex of 35 dwellings built in the mid-1930s as a federal subsistence experiment, located near Parkway Headquarters in Tupelo, Mississippi, is recognized as a historic district in the National Register of Historic Places. More than 356 archeological sites are located on NATR lands, highlighted by six American Indian mounds interpreted for visitors. The most significant of these sites is Emerald Mound near Natchez, Mississippi, the second-largest ceremonial mound in the United States and a designated National Historic Landmark.

Natural Resources: Approximately 900 species of plants help support 47 species of mammals, 136 species of birds, 70 species of reptiles/amphibians, and a variety of other vertebrates and invertebrates. The Parkway provides critical habitat for two (Gray Bat & Slackwater Darter) federally listed threatened and endangered (T&E) species and includes 19 other T&E species within its boundaries. No other unit in the National Park System in the eastern U.S. has more listed species.

The Parkway represents a transect of the physiographic provinces and communities of the Midsouth. These provinces include Southern Pine Hills, North Central Hills, Flatwood, and Pontotoc Ridge. It also passes through six major forest types, two prairies (Jackson and Black Belt), several river systems (the Tombigbee, Lower Mississippi, Pearl, and Tennessee rivers) and four main waterways/watershed areas (Tennessee, Buffalo, and Duck rivers and Bear Creek).

Recreational Resources: The Parkway's 87 mile trails' system consists of 52 nature, hiking, and horse trails and 4 National Scenic Trail segments totaling 65 miles.

Significant Parkway Sites:

- Double Arch Bridge: Received the Presidential Award for Design Excellence in 1995 for its innovative design. It rises 155 feet above the valley and eliminates the use of spandrel columns. (Milepost 438)
- Gordon House and Ferry Site: One of the few structures (constructed in 1818) during the heyday of the Old Trace that survives today. (Milepost 407.7)
- Jackson Falls: Named for President Andrew Jackson, the falls are a beautiful Parkway water feature. (Milepost 404.7)
- Meriwether Lewis Unit: On October 11, 1809, Meriwether Lewis, the noted explorer, was pronounced dead at Grinder's Stand (inn). Whether he was murdered or committed suicide has never been conclusively determined. The site includes a reconstruction of the inn and Lewis' gravesite and monument. (Milepost 385.9)
- Brices Cross Roads National Battlefield Site: Site of Confederate General Nathan Bedford Forrest's brilliant tactical "victory" during the Civil War. Excellent example of "winning the battle but losing the war". (Milepost 281)
- Natchez Trace Parkway Visitor Center (Parkway headquarters): Located midway between Natchez and Nashville, orientation to the Parkway is provided to visitors. (Milepost 266)
- French Camp: Louis LeFleur established a stand here in 1812. It became a school in 1822 and remains one to this day. (Milepost 180.7)
- Cypress Swamp: The nature trail takes you through a water tupelo/bald cypress swamp. (Milepost 122.0)
- Parkway Information Cabin: Re-opened in 2009 as a visitor contact station. (Milepost 102.4)

- Rocky Springs: The old, abandoned town site can be reached by a short trail. (Milepost 54.8)
- Sunken Trace: Walk through a deeply eroded section of the Old Trace at Parkway. (Milepost 41.5)
- Mount Locust: This restored historic house, one of the first stands in Mississippi, has interpretive programs from February through November. Originally a cotton plantation, it also provides a glimpse into the Mississippi 19th century African American experience. (Milepost 15.5)
- Emerald Mound: Ancestors of the Natchez Indians built this ceremonial mound about AD 1400. The second largest of its type in the nation, it is a designated National Historic Landmark that covers nearly 8 acres. (Milepost 10.3)

Popular Parkway Scenic Overlooks:

- Big Tree Parking Area (Milepost 439.4)
- Water Valley Parking Area (Milepost 411.8)
- Baker Bluff Overlook (Milepost 405.1)
- Old Trace Drive (2) (Mileposts 403 and 375.8)
- Swan Valley Overlook (Milepost 392.5)
- Colbert Ferry (Old Ferry Crossing Site) (Milepost 327)
- Freedom Hills Overlook (Milepost 316.6)
- Twenty-Mile Bottom Overlook (Milepost 278.4)
- Black Belt Overlook (Milepost 251.9)
- Little Mountain Overlook (Milepost 186.7)
- Reservoir Overlook (Ross Barnett) (Milepost 105.7)



Cypress Swamp, Milepost 122.0